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POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

ON A WINDOW DISPLAY IN A WESTERN CITY

He changed the card, and pointed, and he twirled himself
around
To show the sack suit's jaunty cut, "a twenty-dollar treat."
Behind the wide show-window's glass he ogled, strutted,
frowned,
Disposed his collar, shot his cuffs, and twinkled, head to
feet.
I stood amid the gaping crowd and watched him from the
street.

That vest-adjusting marionette, that little lacquered slave
In serge and tweed without a crease, disported, deft and
droll,
To coax our custom. Left and right he postured, pert or
grave.
He arched his chest; he tried to smoothe—what creases from
his soul?
I wondered if his underwear was one great thread-webbed
hole!

A subtle pathos reached from him, for all his flashy strut,
We all would fain usurp the stage. 'Twas his heroic dream,
But warped by shrewd necessity; a climbing from the rut,
Like some bedraggled butterfly that crawls from grime to
gleam,
However evanescent, where the public dump-heaps steam.

On a Window Display in a Western City

Tin cans and broken bottles often flash a diamond ray!
A little sun will dry the mire on wings that missed their
mark!
I wondered whither went his bright-shod feet at end of day.
Did drink or drugs devour his soul? Perhaps in mornings
dark
He crawled to some damp bench and stretched 'neath papers
in the park.

Such thoughts contribute saving grace. Believe them? Lord,
I must!
If voluntary choice were—this!—it turns the stomach,
quite,—
Where once these streets were open range, horned cattle
stamped the dust,
And, bronzed and brown, unknown to town's insane electric
light,
Beneath the deep blue, star-pricked skies men rode the herd
by night!

William Rose Benét